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Editorial: Pence thumbs nose at EPA

Kokomo Tribune Editorial Board

In June, Gov. Mike Pence sent a letter to President Obama, informing him Indiana would oppose the then proposed Clean Power Plan.

“Gov. Pence had previously written to [Environmental Protection Agency] administrator Gina McCarthy on Dec. 1, 2014 describing the proposed rules as ‘ill-conceived and poorly constructed,’” according to a Monday press release from the governor’s office. “In both letters, Gov. Pence called for the withdrawal of the rules.”

After the proposed language — scheduled to take effect Aug. 28 — was handed down, Pence announced earlier this week he was making good on that promise.

“When it comes to energy policy, this administration continues to place its environmental agenda ahead of the interests of Hoosier ratepayers, jobs and the economy,” stated Pence Monday. “Here in Indiana, homeowners and businesses rely on coal-burning power plants for low-cost, reliable energy. Yet little to no consideration was given to states like ours throughout the development of the EPA’s

final rule and that is simply not acceptable. ... If the final rule is not significantly improved, then Hoosiers can be assured that on behalf of families, businesses and other ratepayers, Indiana will not comply. Indiana will also continue to vigorously challenge the legality of this rule in the federal courts. Far too much is at stake for jobs and the economy in Indiana for us to do anything less.”

Pence is not alone in this fight. Indiana is one of several states to take such an adversarial position.

“Indiana became the latest state Monday to join a lawsuit challenging an Obama administration rule that gives federal agencies authority to protect some streams, tributaries and wetlands under the Clean Water Act,” reported The Associated Press Monday. “Attorney General Greg Zoeller announced the decision to join the multistate action that challenges as unconstitutional the EPA’s redefinition of the state’s streams, creeks, ponds and wetlands as the ‘waters of the United States.’ Small bodies of water have always been under state jurisdiction. Zoeller said the rule change placing them under federal authority could force agricultural operations that discharge any water or wastewater to obtain expensive federal permits or face stiff civil penalties over the runoff.”

Pence is wasting taxpayer dollars sending Zoeller to fight this perceived overreach by federal government. We apparently have no institutional memory of what it was like before the EPA was created by Republican President Richard Nixon in 1970.

Gov. Pence, you must come up with an alternate plan instead of just saying no. Given the amount of previous and ongoing environmental disasters, we here in Kokomo should be familiar with what happens when business is allowed to ride roughshod over the environment. Heck, our groundwater is contaminated, and we're not even sure what's causing it yet.

What's the use of jobs, governor, if we're all too ill to work?